

priorities such as affordable health care, energy costs, the economy, the rising cost of staying in Iraq and the deficit.

This week, the Senate spent 3 days debating a gay marriage amendment that everyone knew was going nowhere. In order to pass out of the Senate, the amendment needed 67 votes, and they couldn't even get a majority. The issue should be dead for the year, but now we hear the House leadership plans to bring it up later this summer.

Mr. Speaker, let us give ourselves credit for what we have done in Iraq and let us focus on these issues and let us start withdrawing our troops.

AN IMPORTANT DAY IN THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, today is an important day in the global war on terror. One of al Qaeda's most evil and ruthless terrorists, al-Zarqawi, has been eliminated, along with seven of his top aides. Justice has prevailed.

As the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, Zarqawi was the mastermind behind the brutal murder of countless innocent Iraqis, car bombings, assassinations, kidnappings and attacks on our troops. It was Zarqawi who appeared on Internet videos personally beheading innocent civilians for the whole world to see.

News like this shows that we are making steady progress in Iraq. The death of al-Zarqawi strengthens the new Iraqi government and Prime Minister al-Maliki and sends a clear message to the terrorists of the world. The courage and dedication of the U.S. and Iraqi and coalition security forces remind the world that the forces of freedom and liberty will ultimately prevail over the forces of murder and terror.

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DEATH OF AL-ZARQAWI

(Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, thanks to the precise and swift action of the United States military forces, al-Zarqawi's reign of terror has ended.

Osama bin Laden and terrorists worldwide should note that there is no safe place for them to hide. Terrorists in Iraq should also note that the events of the last 24 hours are further proof that the Iraqi people want to live free from fear.

Last year we saw the Iraqi people send a strong message to the terrorists at the ballot box. Last month we witnessed the formation of a new unity government, and today Prime Minister Maliki announced the completion of his cabinet.

The American people understand the road to a democratic way of life is not an easy one. Just as our Nation struggled in the beginning, Iraq has difficult and challenging days ahead. But I am confident that with continued support of the coalition forces, Iraq will figure out the best way to govern themselves in freedom.

The Iraqi people, as well as our enemies, should know we will stay the course because the security of our Nation depends on the willingness to take action to protect and preserve freedom.

JUSTICE IN IRAQ

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, last night the brave men and women of the United States Armed Forces, with Iraqi security forces, delivered a major victory in the global war on terrorism.

Because of their tremendous patience, courage and skill, the most wanted terrorist in Iraq is now dead. And as President Bush has said, there is justice in Iraq.

As the operational commander of the terrorist movement in Iraq, al-Zarqawi delighted in the devastation of Iraq and the destruction of life. As the mastermind behind countless car bombings, mass murders and assassinations, he was responsible for the brutal deaths of many Americans and thousands of innocent Iraqis.

Today's victory in Iraq is a testament to the tremendous talent of the United States military. By risking their lives to kill terrorists in Iraq, these brave men and women are protecting the lives of American families and making our country safer.

As we celebrate this incredible milestone, I rise to express my sincere gratitude to our brave troops and our Iraqi allies.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

VA DATA SECURITY

(Mr. SALAZAR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Speaker, last week the VA revealed that private information for over 26 million veterans was stolen from an employee's home weeks ago, putting their identities and credit at risk.

Mr. Speaker, my father used to have a saying that the more that you poke at a cow pie, the more that it stinks. Well, for nearly 2 weeks the administration insisted that the stolen data only contained the veterans' names, birth dates and Social Security numbers.

On Tuesday, though, the administration revised their story again. So what is the real story? We know that the stolen data contained personal infor-

mation of more than 2.2 million active duty personnel. Yesterday over 145 Members joined me in a letter to President Bush urging him to take action and help those affected to recover from this security breach.

We have introduced legislation, H.R. 5455, that would be the first step in giving veterans access to 1 year of free credit monitoring. I urge my colleagues to cosponsor this bill.

Mr. Speaker, this last month has been an embarrassing display of the VA consistently failing to provide timely information about the severity and scope of the data. The delays and misinformation have hurt veterans and military personnel. It has hurt them at a time when we should be taking aggressive steps to protect their identities and financial standing.

Our veterans and our troops deserve answers and action right now.

AL-ZARQAWI DOWN, FREEDOM UP

(Mr. MCHENRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, sometimes a person's mere existence causes death and destruction in this world. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al Qaeda's leader in Iraq who has led a bloody, bloody campaign of suicide bombings and kidnappings, was killed yesterday by our U.S. forces in an air raid north of Baghdad.

The death of this terrorist breathes new life into our efforts to implement democracy in a region desperate for freedom and hungry for peace.

Mr. Speaker, the Iraqi Parliament, as well, made a major breakthrough today by appointing officials to lead the country's top security ministries, giving Iraq a complete government for the first time since their elections in December of 2005.

Victory in Iraq is not only possible, Mr. Speaker, it is approaching. I want to tell my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, our troops are putting their lives on the line every day and making the sacrifices necessary to ensure safety, security, and a democratic Iraq, which will provide a model for a free and representative government in the Middle East.

Mr. Speaker, peace is a product of strength and democracy. We are showing strength by eliminating the terrorists and implementing democracy which will help root out Islamic extremists in the Middle East.

DEMOCRATS ARE FOCUSED ON THE AMERICAN PEOPLE'S PRIORITIES

(Mr. NADLER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, while House Republicans plan to use the next couple of months trying to distract the attention of the American people away